UNDER THE BRIDGE AND DREAMING:
ONE SOLUTION FOR A DERELICT PLACE IN THE CITY

by

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Abstract

To many the presence of vacant derelict space in the city is problematic. However, these sites can be places of both freedom and exposed history. To find them in a city is a gift. They can be places of opportunities, renewed plant growth and change. They are often created when infrastructure is put in place and later abandoned.

This thesis explores the opportunities and program possibilities of one derelict site in Vancouver, B.C. under the Burrard Street Bridge. Once home to a First Nations village and reserve, the site now stands vacant but for a few left over rail tracks and homeless people camping. But the site has a powerful spirit, one that calls up the events of building, industrial activity and abandonment. This thesis proposes a park for the site. But this is a different type of park. One that encourages people to explore the possibilities of the bridge structure through various programs. The design moves and interventions made in the park are not of an obvious nature, they strive to reveal, acknowledge and celebrate the site's unique character, while preserving its inherent essence.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ........................................................................................................ ii

LIST OF FIGURES ............................................................................................... V

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ................................................................................... vi

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW ............................................. 1

1.1 INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................ 1
1.2 APPROACH AND INTENT ......................................................................... 2
1.3 THESIS GOALS ...................................................................................... 3
1.4 THESIS OBJECTIVES ........................................................................... 3
1.6 DISCUSSION OF PRECEDENTS AND LITERATURE REVIEW ............ 4
1.7 PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT .................................................................. 4
1.8 METHODOLOGY ...................................................................................... 5
1.9 DESIGN APPROACH ............................................................................. 5

CHAPTER 2 – REVIEW OF THEORETICAL LITERATURE ............................. 6

2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW ........................................................................... 6
2.2 URBAN PLANNING – THE RATIONAL APPROACH ............................ 6
2.3 ENVIRONMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY ....................................................... 7
2.4 URBAN ECOLOGY ................................................................................. 7
2.5 PHENOMENOLOGY ............................................................................... 8
2.6 ARCHITECTURAL THEORY AND THE AVANT GARDE - THE SITUATIONIST INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT ................. 9
2.7 SUMMARY OF LITERATURE REVIEW .................................................. 10

CHAPTER 3 – PRECEDENT REVIEW ............................................................... 11

3.1 THE FREMONT TROLL, SEATTLE, WASHINGTON .................................. 11
3.2 MARKINGS, SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA .................................................. 11
3.3 BURNSIDE PARK, PORTLAND, OREGON ............................................ 11
3.4 PROMENADE DES PLANTES, PARIS ..................................................... 12
3.5 THE HIGH LINE, NEW YORK CITY ....................................................... 12
3.6 DUISEBERG PARK NORD, DUISEBERG ............................................. 12
3.7 SUMMARY OF PRECEDENTS ............................................................... 12

CHAPTER 4 – SITE ANALYSIS ....................................................................... 14

4.1 SITE BOUNDARIES ............................................................................... 14
4.2 SITE HISTORY ....................................................................................... 14
4.3 SITE CONTEXT ...................................................................................... 15
4.4 PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE ............................................. 16
4.5 VEGETATION ON THE SITE ................................................................. 16
4.6 SITE CIRCULATION ............................................................................... 17
4.7 PRESENT USERS AND CONDITIONS OF THE SITE .......................... 17
4.8 EXPERIENTIAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE ................................... 18
4.9 SITE CHARACTER ZONES ...................................................................... 19
4.10 OTHER PARTS OF THE SITE .............................................................. 20

CHAPTER 5 - THE MASTER PARK PLAN ...................................................... 29

5.1 GENERAL INTENT OF THE MASTER PLAN ........................................ 29
5.2 SITE CHARACTER ZONES ...................................................................... 29
5.2.1 The Meadow .................................................................................. 30
5.2.2 The Old Trestle Walk .................................................................. 31
5.2.3 North of the Seawall ................................................................... 32
5.2.4 Under the Bridge .......................................................... 33
5.2.5 The Woods .............................................................. 33
5.2.6 The Hydro Right-of-Way ............................................ 34

CHAPTER 6 – SITE MANAGEMENT PLAN .......................................................... 48
6.1 MANAGEMENT PLAN GOALS .................................................. 48
6.2 MANAGEMENT PLAN ISSUES ....................................................... 48
6.3 MANAGEMENT OF LAND ZONES IN THE PARK ........................................... 49
   6.3.1 Meadow Establishment and Mowing Schedules ....................... 49
   6.3.2 The Woods .............................................................. 49
   6.3.3 Constructed Wetland in the Woods ..................................... 50
   6.3.4 Blackberries ........................................................ 50
6.4 MANAGEMENT OF SOCIAL / CULTURAL PROGRAMS IN THE PARK ........................................... 51
   6.4.1 Camping .............................................................. 51
   6.4.2 Graffiti and Arts Events .............................................. 51
   6.4.3 Safety ................................................................. 51

CHAPTER 7 – CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY .................................................. 53

LIST OF REFERENCES ........................................................................... 54

APPENDIX A - PLANT LIST .................................................................. 55
List of Figures

Figure 1 - Site Precedents .................................................................................................................. 13
Figure 2 - Site Context ...................................................................................................................... 21
Figure 3 - Historical Site Photos ...................................................................................................... 22
Figure 4 - Site Ownership History ................................................................................................... 23
Figure 5 - Site Analysis ..................................................................................................................... 24
Figure 6 - Site Character Zones ....................................................................................................... 25
Figure 7 - Site Photos ....................................................................................................................... 26
Figure 8 - Site Photos ....................................................................................................................... 27
Figure 9 - Site Impression ................................................................................................................ 28
Figure 10 - Master Plan ................................................................................................................... 35
Figure 11 - Park Entrance at 1st Avenue .......................................................................................... 36
Figure 12 - The Meadow .................................................................................................................. 37
Figure 13 - Site Section, Channel and Meadow Lounging Stones .................................................... 38
Figure 14 - Stair Shortcut to Creekside Drive .................................................................................. 39
Figure 15 - The Old Trestle Walk and Shelter ................................................................................ 40
Figure 16 - Blackberry Light Details and Rose Pergola ................................................................. 41
Figure 17 - The Space Under the Bridge at Pier 1 ......................................................................... 42
Figure 18 - Washroom in Berm and North End Under Bridge ....................................................... 43
Figure 19 - Additions to the Bridge, Art and Infrastructure ............................................................ 44
Figure 20 - Possibilities for Performance Space Under the Bridge .................................................. 45
Figure 21 - Passageways and Discoveries in the Park .................................................................. 46
Figure 22 - Planting Plans for Wetland, Trestle and Woods ............................................................ 47
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Chapter 1 – Introduction and Overview

1.1 Introduction

Derelict, vacant space in cities is inevitable; it appears, disappears and reappears as events and economic conditions change. These sites often attract people and activities that may have been rejected by mainstream society and, similar to the sites, are marginal. They are places where people who do not have homes find a home, and young people who are looking for freedom can be themselves. These are often former industrial sites, old transportation lines, or sites of derelict buildings. Sites that are no longer in use, but are rich with traces of a former use, open the imagination up to the people that once inhabited them and other eras and ways of living. It is partly the unanswered questions and vague traces that are left behind on such sites that point to and imply stories from the past (Potteiger and Purinton, p. 214, 1998).

In the book Landscape Narratives the authors characterize what they call the wasteland, land damaged by industrial activity, nuclear accidents and garbage dumps, as an ecological history, an elegy, and a progressivist narrative. As an individual walks through the city they often come upon these places by accident. In the context of the planned, designed urban landscape they appear as anomalies or, as if in a dream. In such places the rules of the rest of the world do not apply, they are non-judgmental landscapes; they are often the best place to feel alone in a large city. Because they are wild places, when one first comes across them they often seem a unique discovery. The feeling of finding a place, and that perhaps one is trespassing on private property, helps to build interest and/or mystery when exploring areas such as these in the city. They are also wonderful places to witness the resilience and power of nature, as it takes over and engulfs the man-made elements of a place. In his book “Finding Lost Space”, Trancik writes “... they offer tremendous opportunities to the designer for urban redevelopment and creative infill and for rediscovering the many hidden resources in our cities” (Trancik, p. 4, 1986).

Although some view the presence of these places in the city as blights on the landscape, this thesis approaches the issue from a different perspective. It is exactly that lost quality which makes these sites rich, not only in history, but also in the many textures of decay and regeneration. These sites play an important role in our experience of the city, simply as they are. Though many may seem foreboding and dangerous, this is exactly what makes them powerful places. When encountering the strange or odd on such sites the imagination is sparked; we might imagine our worst fears in these places. Architectural critic Anthony Fidler believes that “...the experience of the uncanny is an outgrowth of the horror story or the grotesque, both related to the Romantic experience of the sublime” (Potteiger and Purinton, p. 214, 1998). Hough has acknowledged that this wide range of spaces in the city, old rail routes to decommissioned gas stations “... provide opportunities for creative play and environmental education that should be recognized” (Hough, p. 144, 1995).

When I began my thesis I did not have a site selected. Rather, I had a feeling for a kind of place that I wanted to find a site to match. Nor did I have a preconception of a program or specific project to work on. Fortunately, there were many places in Vancouver to choose from: vacant gas stations, disputed vacant lots, and plenty of ‘lost space’. One type of space in the city that is consistently underused of which there are many is the space under bridges. This provided me with a choice of a number of appropriate sites that were urban, that had been created by infrastructure and often contained traces of
infrastructure and where nature was slowly taking over. The place also had to have what Brill calls a 'charge'. Places with a charge "...may be forbidding, awesome, and resonate with ominous feeling" (Brill, 1986).

The charged place I discovered was the area underneath the Burrard Street Bridge on the South side of False Creek in Vancouver. It is known as the CPR Y lands, referring to the most recent owners and the unusual shape on the east side caused by the curving railway line. The site has a variety of spatial experiences: open, closed, protected, and exposed. Many people cut through the site on their way to and from Granville Island and Burrard Street. It is also home to many homeless people. The main defining physical characteristic of the site is the Burrard Street Bridge which roughly divides the site in half and creates a large covered area underneath it. One is able to walk almost the entire length of bridge between the staggered concrete columns. To the west is a block of alder and birch woods, and to the east an open area with remains of a rail line which ends abruptly at a blackberry infested outcropping. This outcropping is the site of the former Kitsilano Trestle Bridge across False Creek to the north. The site appears as somewhat of a surprise, as it lies between the affluent neighborhood of Kitsilano Point and Granville Island, the successful market post-industrial retrofit of the 1980's. It is also surrounded by highly designed, institutional landscapes: Vanier Park, Seaforth Park, Seaforth Armoury, and the Vancouver Planetarium complex. The monolithic Molson Brewery, to the south east of the site, is one of the last survivors left over from False Creek's industrial past.

The surprise of coming upon a largely unkempt landscape in such a 'finished' tidy context is a perceptual break as we pass through a variety of environments in the city. Beside its tidy neighbours, it stands out even more. The site is a reminder of what happens in cities when things just get left - nature takes over once again.

1.2 Approach and Intent

The intent of this thesis is to acknowledge the importance of forgotten, derelict sites in the city and to illustrate this through design. There are methods of acknowledging history without representing it in an inauthentic or artificial way. Additionally, the intent is to explore methods of revealing a site's roughness without over designing. Above all it is an exercise in balancing design with doing nothing at all, and creating a management plan to guide the evolution of a place. It is an attempt to celebrate the roughness of places in the city by highlighting the aspects of them that make them rough. The chosen program of a park serves as a reminder that even though we live in cities, the wild is not far below the surface and that, left unchecked, the urban environment will quickly revert back to a more natural state.

So what to do with a derelict site? And, if the intention is to celebrate the site and reveal aspects of its derelict nature, how does one achieve this without celebrating it to the point where it becomes something other than derelict? Maintaining a balance between making appropriate interventions and leaving things alone was a difficult task. This dilemma led directly to the question that this design thesis attempts to answer. Simply put: what are the range of program possibilities that can occur on a derelict site and what sort of management solutions are necessary to provide support, but not too much support, to a site such as this. What constitutes too much design and what not enough? During the process of site analysis and design for this site the issue frequently came up that perhaps nothing needed doing with the site at all, it was fine as it stood.
1.3 Thesis Goals

The thesis goals are:

1. To explore a range of program options that do not destroy the overall site structure or character, but celebrate its roughness and the related inherent characteristics.
2. To illustrate how the creation of an urban wild area can result in a unique ecologically responsible place and one that has lower maintenance standards than a conventional park.
3. To understand how the derelict nature of some sites can be exploited.
4. To create a management framework that will guide the form and activities that will take place and already do take place on the selected site.

1.4 Thesis Objectives

The thesis objectives are:

1. Develop specific designs that respect the existing character of the selected site.
2. Develop interventions that are intended for the purpose of experiencing the different types of spaces on the site; the open area, the trestle, the woods and the space underneath the bridge.
3. Make additions to the existing bridge structure that will increase the programming possibilities by allowing more activities to take place under it.
4. Develop a design that knits together the fragmented areas on the site, creating a sense of cohesiveness across the site.
5. Provide a range of visual examples that explore the program possibilities.
6. Develop a low-cost management plan for the site design including policy statements about the levels of and variety of activity intended to take place in the park.

1.5 Design Guidelines

Although they are not designed, places that are created by accident or historical events hold just as many clues to design and use as clearly planned ones. Often the context helps point to an appropriate design for a site. The following are the primary design guidelines that have been applied to the selected site:

- Interventions should speak to the site, its character, contents and history
- Infrastructure should be left visible and intact, allowing planting interventions to grow over and around the existing artifacts
- Interventions should be constructed of materials that are permitted to age and accumulate vegetation, colour and stain.
- Interventions should accept and respond to the current circulation patterns and site uses.
1.6 Discussion of Precedents and Literature Review

Precedents were taken from a variety of sources. There were many examples of architectural studies of building possibilities under bridges including housing developments, skateboard parks, and public markets. The most suitable precedents came from public art installations that placed large interventions around infrastructure (the Fremont Troll in Seattle and George Hargreaves’ ‘Markings’ in San Jose). A literature review found that there was little documentation of work done celebrating the natural qualities of vacant urban land (such as the many undocumented guerrilla gardens and spontaneous camps of people that occur in every city). The temporal nature of vacant lots may be one explanation as to why there is little in the way of precedents; their status is temporary and often altered by the general public and individuals.

Although very little has been written specifically about the experience of derelict urban places, much has been discussed about the increasing placelessness in our modern cities; how they are becoming homogenized and devoid of unique character. For the purposes of this thesis, the presence of derelict urban land (even in the interim) is seen as adding diversity and interest to an increasingly designed and planned urban environment. Phenomenologists such as Edward Relph are particularly concerned with the issue of placelessness and loss of individual urban character. Still others have studied people’s perceptions of the types of plant material on vacant lots. The importance of allowing nature to take over in certain areas of cities, creating urban wilds, has environmental benefits. In the work of the Kaplans it is argued that places with mystery and complexity not only increase our appreciation of them, they help to form mental maps of our neighborhoods and cities.

Kevin Lynch, who has researched and written extensively about our mental maps of our local areas, has also examined the importance of time and its influence on places, and how it continues the narrative of the landscape. Moura Quayle has written on the dialectical relationship between the rough and refined in the public realm and also as a design tool. Additionally, the Situationists, a group formed in France in the 1950’s, developed an experimental practice known as the drift (derive) which involved creating subjective maps of the city and understanding it from a experiential, ephemeral level.

1.7 Program Development

During the process of program development for the selected site a wide range of programs were considered: dance, theatre, music, art exhibitions, artist live work studios, shops, offices, light industry and manufacturing, an iron forgery, bicycle repair shop and open market. This initial list was broken down into more general land use themes:

1. Places for youth such as a hostel, skateboard parks, etc.
2. Cultural functions such as theatre performances, a dance studio or an outdoor movie screen.
3. Conventional in fill development such as mixed use residential – studio, offices, shops, cafes i.e. the creation of a new neighborhood.
4. Community gardens.
5. Recreational space and/or natural space in the form of a park.
Although these were reasonable programs to pursue, the intention was to explore the issues of marginality, the elemental character of the site and its potency. As a result, a park was the most appropriate fit. Programs involving buildings and any massive changes in infrastructure, though legitimate spatial-architectural challenges, were not truly in line with the above-stated philosophy of celebrating vacant urban land. In fact, a program of site redevelopment would completely reverse the conditions of the site, rendering it no longer vacant. The park option appeared to be the most appropriate choice because it was the option that provided the most potential for enjoyment and experience of the space without completely altering it. The space and its character would simply be accentuated and emphasized. But it would not be a typical park. The interventions made in the park would have to be subtle but sweeping. The overall design would also require a management plan that would prescribe not only a system of landscape management (i.e. when and by what method to mow a meadow area, etc.) but also a set of policies that would allow many types of behaviour and activities that reflected the park's free and inclusive spirit.

1.8 Methodology

Once the site had been selected, a general site analysis was conducted. This involved study of the history of the site from city archives, the Squamish Nation, and city staff. Site structure, basic circulation, issues of connectivity and present uses were recorded and mapped. After many visits to the site at different times of the day and year, a general experiential impression was expressed in a collage evocative of the myths and memories of the site (see Figure 9). Many photographs were also taken. Later in the process, the site was broken down into character zones in order to distill its essential elements. As well, research was done on the natural history of vacant lots and the variety of 'weed' species they contain. The Squamish nation has also created a series of maps chronicling the history of the site's continued expropriation over the years (see Figure 4).

1.9 Design approach

The general approach to the design of the selected site was:

- All program options were considered conceptually before selecting the park program.
- Use cues from the existing site structure which emphasize and build on the existing character zones of the site. (site desire lines and the open and closed aspects of the site)
- Playing the rough against the refined and rough against rough in program possibilities and plant material additions.
Chapter 2 – Review of Theoretical Literature

2.1 Literature Review

Residual space is most often discussed in terms of it being problematic or the root of other problems in the city. This literature review has sought out research and perspectives that speak to the value of these places rather than their negative qualities. In Moura Quayle’s article on the principle of the rough and refined she describes residual or wasted space in the city as a positive element. “Urban derelict sites also reject the status quo and offer visual and sensory excitement akin to being somewhere “off limits” (Quayle, p. 2, 1999).

The research that speaks to residual urban space comes from a range of disciplines. Each discipline offers its own supporting thesis and definition of these spaces. The sources range from social geographical theories and phenomenology to a more scientific, rational basis for looking at cities as organisms in terms of their structure and ecological base. As well, there are architectural theories of space that explore creative, artistic expressions of cities and ways of reading the city that are experiential in nature. All the perspectives identify the importance of these types of spaces but all use slightly different languages to explore and express it.

2.2 Urban Planning – The Rational Approach

Conventional urban planners and geographers consider residual space to be opportunities for revitalization. Roger Trancik believes that space is ‘lost’ and should not remain lost, but should be identified and transformed into more accessible, connected, humane, and safe spaces. Trancik views vacant urban spaces as “…undesirable urban areas that are in need of redesign - antispaces, making no positive contribution to the surroundings or users “ (Trancik, p. 4, 1986). While citing modernism, functionalism, increased popularity of the car, land use and stricter zoning laws as being the cause of such spaces, Trancik draws from what are now considered staples in the urban design world for solutions. Planners such as Kevin Lynch, whose methods of interpreting the city are well known, believes that designers are examples of professionals who are involved in remediating the ills of urban areas.

Although the identification of this type of space is in line with the starting point of this thesis, its response is quite a different type to the design interventions I suggest. While Trancik advocates ‘finding’ the lost space, the methodology of this thesis is intended to exploit and reveal that ‘lost’ quality of the site without completely losing the inherent site character. Trancik believes that the lost spaces in the city exist as major gaps which disrupt the overall continuity of the city form (Trancik, p. 3, 1986). It is proposed in this thesis that lost urban spaces, though they may appear to be gaps in the urban fabric, are integral to city form and can be accepted for what they are.

Another method of interpreting the city discussed by Kevin Lynch is in terms of its imageability. A place that is imageable is “…well formed, distinct, and remarkable” (Lynch, p. 9, 1960). Lynch developed a very simple way of describing how people cognitively organize spaces in the city using the common elements such as paths, nodes, landmarks, boundaries, and edges. These elements help to describe how the city (or neighborhood) is structured and, by evaluating the absence or presence of these
elements, the imageability of a place. It is possible, that residual space, especially one such as the selected site that is used as a short cut and an informal recreation area, could be conceived in this fashion. On the selected site the Burrard Bridge is a large landmark itself, the paths cutting through it are legitimate paths that many use, and the boundaries may differ from person to person. To some the alder woods on the west side of the site may be a boundary, while to others, the woods may be a landmark or be represented by the pathways through it.

It is possible that a distinct site such as this is part of the collection of unusual, accidental spaces in the area, and contributes to an individual’s imageability of the city. It is also possible that this site has all these attributes within the perception of the cross section of users who pass through it. The selected site’s size and position (under the Burrard Bridge) may create a distinct character that gives it the status of landmark or node. The site may also serve as a way-finding mechanism to some, even though it may make some feel unsure. Due to environmental perception being highly subjective, it is possible that a place can be both remarkable and threatening at the same time.

2.3 Environmental Psychology

Environmental Psychology deals with how we perceive, respond to and prefer different environments. The work of Stephen and Rachael Kaplan has been copious and extensive on this topic. Behind much of their work is the idea that we are not simply looking at our environment but are involved in it (Kaplan and Kaplan, p. 82, 1982). This is a key factor in understanding not only preference for certain environments, but also how we react in different environments at different times. The Kaplans have developed methods for understanding environmental preference and that there are essential elements that are necessary if an environment is going to be attractive to an individual. The Kaplan’s preference model deals with the immediate environment or what the viewer is looking at right now. The following are basic elements of environmental preference:

Coherence - how easily a place can be organized into identifiable chunks or groups.
Complexity - is there enough in the place to keep busy (at least visually), and does the place incorporate the right balance of interest and complexity.
Mystery - information is suggested, there is a strong presence of continuity and a self-paced character of discovery.
Legibility - the right balance of interest and complexity, with the appearance that one would be able to find one’s way through an environment (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1982).

These guidelines have been important in understanding our environmental preferences in a basic way. However, how individuals respond to places on an aesthetic level, and their responses on a subjective level in representation and expression is another wide-ranging field of inquiry.

2.4 Urban Ecology

The establishment of urban wilds or natural areas in cities is another area of research and practice that bears some relation to this thesis. Although generally more difficult to achieve in North American cities where such spaces are rare, urban wilds are becoming an ecologically and economically responsible method of managing areas of waste or disturbance where native and successional plants are
appearing. Even though these spaces are typically accidental in their origins, they have the potential of becoming well-established natural areas. There are certain benefits to applying alternative practices such as this in an urban area. A city has the opportunity to distinguish itself from other cities by encouraging the growth of its own native plants in its natural areas (Spirn, 1984). As well, by allowing the growth of native plants that have adapted to exist in that region, "Both remnants of native plant communities and the urban successional plant communities represent an unexploited resource in most cities" (Spirn, 1984). The encouragement of these types of plant communities in urban areas not only provides important ecological benefits to soil, air and water but also bridges an educational gap between a place’s natural history and its urban qualities (Hough, 1995). This relatively new method of park development has potential especially for places in the city that are vacant or unused former industrial sites and other types of vacant lots. Left unattended, many of these areas will naturally move toward this aesthetic.

2.5 Phenomenology

Phenomenology is the science of phenomena. To cultural geographers and Landscape Architects the phenomenology is the examination of the phenomenon of being in a space and our experience of it. Designers use this information in their work to understand people’s attitude towards different types of spaces (home, local neighborhood, etc.) and how they experience them.

Edward Relph writes about what makes places unique. His primary argument or critique on cities has been their increasing commercialization and commodification. He believes that by turning a place into something to consume (for example: Main Street in Disneyland) it loses its genuineness as a place, it is not real. One example is the design strategy of allowing the former uses of places to inform the design of a shopping mall or commercial complex. Often projects using this approach have been undertaken in the name of historic preservation but, unfortunately, they often just pay lip service to previous site uses either through architectural design or superficial details. Relph sees these practices as being the culprit that destroys the authentic nature that is possible in cities. "National symbols, local histories, fantasies and dreams, indeed anything nice from any time or place can be imagineered to promote consumption" (Relph, p. 188. 1987). Following on this sentiment, only programs and design interventions were considered for the selected site that would be true to the site and respond to the natural evolution of it.

Much of the observations and writing of J.B. Jackson has been on the subject of the ordinary, undesigned landscapes of the United States. He has a different attitude towards the types of landscapes that Relph criticizes. Jackson considers our enthusiasm for preservation and restoration of historical landscapes as a sign that we are not just being sentimental. He sees it as almost a natural process of rediscovery of the old that we must engage in. For, "...that is how we reproduce the cosmic scheme and correct history" (Jackson, p. 102, 1980). It is a reinterpretation and a re-presentation of things that we take so much joy in after the initial discovery is what Jackson calls the "ruins" (Jackson, p. 102, 1980). But in order for this to occur, we need to pass through the necessary phase of neglect in order to rediscover and reinterpret and celebrate the ruins.

The work of human geographers has been informative in terms of their contributions and methods of investigation on cognitive mapping, environmental preferences and territoriality. Similar to Environmental Psychologists, there has been an attempt in recent years to break down elements of
landscape to measurable or recordable factors. These might be very fundamental qualities of an environment that determine whether it is pleasing, scary, exciting or... Unfortunately (or fortunately) most disciplines have not been able to really measure what makes a place possess that certain aura, charge or genius loci. Likewise, "conventional behavioural geography...has given little attention to the experiential qualities of landscape and environment." (Seamon, p. 170, 1984). It may be that other types of disciplines, or forms of representation are more successful in expressing the subjective quality of a place.

In the professions of Landscape Architecture and Land Art, there is much more opportunity to express these subjective responses to environment. Although they are not measurable, these expressions can provide more and richer information than conventional representations of places.

2.6 Architectural Theory and the Avant Garde - The Situationist International Movement

The Situationists were a group of artists, political activists and writers formed in France in the 1950's. This group was one of many contributing to a critique of the modern commercial society that was growing at the time. They also developed an experimental form of reading the city and representing it. The theory of derive or 'the drift' was a method of walking, or rather creative wandering, through the city and recording perceptions of different landscapes one would pass through. The derive, or drift, "...is first and foremost ludic (or playful) and is a product of the enticements, influences, and psychogeographic poles of attraction offered by the modern city." (Voileau in Goldhagen and Legault, p.242, 2000). Through the experience of discovering a forgotten landscape in the city one not only brings to it a creative perception of what one is seeing (i.e. the possibilities of history or aesthetic appreciation of rough and refined aspects), but the site itself becomes part of the whole collage of different landscapes one passes through in the urban environment.

The activities of the group often revolved around the construction of situations or events taking place in different parts of the city as one walked through it. Moments constructed into situations could be considered "moments of rupture, of acceleration, revolutions in the individual everyday life" (Voileau, 2000, p.240). As the group became more critical of modern commercial society (and witnessed the changes and modernizing of Paris), these moments of rupture or revolution became more important. As the urban landscape contains fewer and fewer surprises, coming upon a site such as this can act as a rupture.
2.7 Summary of Literature Review

From this brief survey it is clear that there are a variety of approaches to the issues of perception and approach to vacant or derelict land in the city. The ecological approach is the most pragmatic of those reviewed and has been the first to acknowledge the environmental and experiential value of derelict land and recognize its potential. The more artistic, expressive disciplines of Landscape Architecture, Art, and Architecture provide the essential perspective that not all spaces are attractive to everyone. These are decidedly non-scientific approaches that are often able to capture the essence and emotional aspects of a place most successfully.
Chapter 3 – Precedent Review

The precedents discussed below have used left over space in some way, but the reinterpretations and present uses are very divergent. Some of these landscapes are highly designed, while others have been simply left and chronicled by users. Still others have had their form determined by whole neighborhoods. All of these precedents have either used current or remnant infrastructure, derelict or decommissioned factories, abandoned elevated rail lines or the underside of a bridge. As a result, all of these places have been considered marginal places (see Figure 1).

3.1 The Fremont Troll, Seattle, Washington

The Fremont Troll was a community art project instigated by a group of architects and designers known as the Jersey Devils. Snuggled under a bridge in the neighbourhood of Fremont in Seattle, the Troll has created a myth and has become a popular meeting place for street festivals. The Troll is a large-scale sculpture constructed of concrete with extended arms and a somewhat scary expression on its face. In its huge hand is a real VW bug which suggests that motorists on the bridge deck above should beware of the Troll under the bridge which might come out and grab you. The Troll has transformed what had been a marginal space in the community into a destination for locals, tourists and celebrations.

3.2 Markings, San Jose, California

The artistic installation entitled ‘Markings’, was a collaborative effort by George Hargreaves and Associates and Native American artist and linguist Julian Lange in San Jose, California. It is an expression of the experience of infrastructure passing over the land, and the spatial qualities of being under a freeway. Freeway support columns were wrapped in aluminum in order to render them, create lighting effects from the sun and to accentuate the ordinary. This temporary work spoke about the changes that the site has seen in recent history, such as the construction of the freeway. This was done by marking the support columns with native American words facing the adjacent river and English words facing the adjacent street. The work speaks to the juxtaposition of philosophies in modern western and ancient native American cultures.

3.3 Burnside Park, Portland, Oregon

Burnside Park in Portland, Oregon, is another example of a use of space under a highway overpass. In this case a skateboard park was designed and constructed illegally by a local swimming pool builder and skateboarder. It later became sanctioned by the City of Portland where skateboarding in the city is illegal, but is now one of the best known places in the world to skateboard. The site affords more than adequate space for this type of sport which is often marginalized in cities.
3.4 Promenade des Plantes, Paris

The Promenade des Plantes in Paris occupies the site of a former elevated railway line. Along the top of the elevated structure, which affords unique views of different neighborhoods in Paris, is a formal, paved and planted linear park. Its position above the street provides a unique perspective and experience of the city. At the street-level the stone, arched structure of the elevated railway line is used as a facade for galleries, studios and shops set into the structure. Although, most of its former industrial character and roughness has been reduced, the preservation of the structure and the clever integration of usable space into and on top of this piece of architecture is a clear acknowledgment of the site’s history.

3.5 The High Line, New York City

The High Line, as it has become known, is a similar structure to Paris’ Promenade Plantee located in the lower west side of Manhattan. This abandoned, elevated railway line has only recently become a recognized and appreciated element of its local community. Along the length of the High Line succession vegetation has begun to take over, and the layering of this natural effect onto the rail lines and the structure itself creates a true feeling of abandonment. The High Line functions as an abandoned and unclaimed place open to trespass, which adds to its intrigue. Within Manhattan, where property values are extraordinary and land is typically put to its highest and best use, the existence of this space which functions as a linear park is a resource. Alas, recent rumors indicate that the High Line is destined to become a ‘legitimate’ promenade.

3.6 Duisberg Park Nord, Duisberg

Another precedent which utilizes a formerly abandoned industrial site is Duisberg Park Nord in the town of Duisberg, Germany. The park is the creation of Peter Latz, Landscape Architect who has designed a park and master plan for re-use of a former steel factory on the site. An integral part of Latz’s design is the re-use of the large abandoned structures for play and to inform planting and spatial forms within the park. Although it is still fairly formal in its planting design, the presence of the large, abandoned, aging and rusted steel structures and machinery achieves an authentic impression, and the feeling of being in a truly derelict place.

3.7 Summary of Precedents

The precedents surveyed here are just a few of a wide range of examples of programs that can occur on derelict land. Although it was difficult to find any theatre or cultural events that exploited the underside of bridges, it may be that the underground nature of these productions is on the fringes and not documented. It was however rewarding to see that in most of the precedents cited, the designers and programmers responded to the marginal nature of their sites.
Figure 1 - Site Precedents

Duisberg Nord, Germany

The High Line, New York City

Burnside Skatepark, Portland Oregon

Promenade Plantee, Paris

Markings, San Jose

The Fremont Troll, Seattle
Chapter 4 - Site Analysis

4.1 Site Boundaries

The site is irregular in shape and includes the area directly east and west of the underside of the south end of the Burrard Bridge (see Figure 2). The Burrard Bridge bisects the site, running roughly through the centre of it. The area on the east side of the bridge is bordered on the south by The Molson Brewery and its related parking lots. The eastern side of this area is bordered by a number of mid-rise office and residential buildings adjacent to Granville Island. To the north lies False Creek and the Burrard Civic Marina. The area of the site directly under the bridge is bounded by False Creek on the north and the point where the bridge deck meets grade on the south. The area of the site west of the bridge is a block of alder woods. A driveway leading to the Vancouver Museum, the City of Vancouver Archive and a public boat launch border the woods on the west. The woods are bounded on the north by a parking lot for the Burrard Civic Marina and on the south by the Vancouver Academy of Music building. The site is currently zoned for commercial use.

4.2 Site History

The site's history is characterized by continual division and expropriation. Originally it was part of the False Creek Indian Reserve created by the Crown Council of British Columbia in 1869. At this time, and up to 1913, the area was populated with many aboriginal families who lived along the creek and the land adjacent to it. After 1869, portions of the reserve were expropriated for a number of reasons.

The first expropriations of the reserve took place in 1886 and 1901 by the CPR railway. Subsequently, further expropriations occurred in 1930 when construction of the Burrard Street Bridge began. More land was taken from the False Creek Indian Reserve in 1934 to allow for construction of the Seaforth Armoury on the east side of Burrard Street not far from False Creek (see Figures 3 and 4).

In 1913, the government of British Columbia 'purchased' the remaining land by paying $11,500 to each of the 58 remaining families on the reserve. The government then loaded all the belongings of these 58 families onto a barge and took them to Squamish; anything left on the site was burned. The original site expanded by approximately six acres between 1916-1926 as the Vancouver Harbour Commission dredged part of False Creek and deposited fill. This was for the purposes of allowing the adjacent portion of the Creek to become a major deep-water harbour, however the project was abandoned in 1926. The resultant fill extended the site to the north in the present site of Harmony Park. During the 1920's and 30's there were two buildings on the site whose roofs had to be modified when the bridge was built. They were located at what is now the south end of the bridge deck and were used as the BC Electric Railway Company's streetcar repair shops. All that remains of these buildings are fragments of concrete. Until the mid 1950's, when the B.C. Electric streetcars were taken out of commission, this was a busy and well-used area of the site.

During the Depression, two major building projects were undertaken on the site; the Burrard Bridge itself and the Federal Department of National Defence storage depot. The latter involved the construction of numerous concrete buildings in the area where the alder woods now stand, directly to
the west of the south end of the bridge. The construction of the Burrard Bridge during the Depression was meant to be a city building venture (together with the construction of a new city hall), to boost civic pride. The attractive gateways and detailing of the bridge were also meant to mask the smoke and ugliness of the highly industrialized area of False Creek. There was a staircase leading from the bridge deck to the south shore of False Creek below in Pier One, which is located on the selected site. Unfortunately, this stairway became a popular place to sleep in the Depression years, and was closed soon after the bridge opened. Evidence of the stairwell can still be seen by the bricked-in entry way and by examining the façade of Pier One.

After the World War II the Squamish nation surrendered the land to the BC government and in turn the government transferred responsibility of the land to the Federal government. Portions of the land were subsequently sold to the following parties:

- In 1947 to Department of National Defence; this area later became Vanier Park.
- In 1948 to Canada Mortgage and Housing Commission; this portion became the Molson Brewery.
- In 1955 to Department of Public Works for Fishermen's Wharf on False Creek.
- In 1955 to private individuals who later developed the tall apartment building on Chestnut Street south of the site known as 'Parkview Towers'.
- In 1959 to the National Trust Company; this area east of the bridge later became the Pennyfarthing development where mid-rise office and residential buildings currently stand.
- In 1965 to Giroday Sawmills; this area also eventually became part of the Pennyfarthing development.

By 1965 the entire reserve had been sold for approximately one million dollars in revenue to the Squamish Nation. The Western portion of the site where the woods presently stand is currently leased from the Federal Government to the City of Vancouver Parks Board. Up until recently the balance of the site (where the rail tracks are) was the property of the CPR. In August 2002 the remaining undeveloped 10 acres was returned to the Squamish Nation by the B.C. Court of Appeal. Although the future of the site is still unknown, recovering ownership of the site is a significant symbolic and historic victory for the Squamish Nation.

### 4.3 Site Context

The context of the site is partly what makes it so unique. To the southeast is the large imposing structure of the Molson Brewery, which often emits large clouds of steam from its rooftop. The Pennyfarthing development to the northeast is an unfortunate group of dark brick structures constructed in the 1980's that look in on themselves and their tidy suburban style cul-de-sac, Creekside Drive. These buildings include offices and high-end residential units. Cutting through the northern portion of the site is the Seawall pathway which is cut in-between two 4 metre high berms that are built around the bridge columns. West of the site, is the expansive open space of Vanier Park. Constructed in the 1960’s, it is typical of this era of parks; spartan in its planting scheme and amorphous in its shape. It remains a popular spot for dogs, joggers, kite flying and children's and theatre festivals. Parking for the public, the Coast Guard (whose building is projected out over the water just to the north-
west of the site), and the Burrard Civic Marina are scattered along the waterfront to the west of the bridge and in Vanier Park (see Figure 5).

Further east, Granville Island, the oft-cited industrial retrofit is one of the city’s most successful public spaces. Granville Island includes a variety of uses such as a public market, shops, restaurants, theatre, offices, artists’ studios, an art school, a hotel, a community centre and park space. Located to the north of the site, on the north shore of False Creek is Vancouver’s downtown peninsula. Although not visible from all parts of the site, some areas do offer panoramic views of the towers on the north side of False Creek. The wall of towers and their bright white facades contribute to the very urban context and feeling on the site. Along the length of the bridge, under and across the site itself, one can hear the dull roar of traffic from the bridge deck above.

4.4 Physical Description of the Site

What makes the site unique is that a large component of it is the underside, or subterranean side, of a very spectacular piece of urban infrastructure; the Burrard Street Bridge. The central arch-gateway detailing of the bridge which cars pass under is a pale yellow wedding cake-style, with stylized characters and art deco detailing, coloured tiles and a quasi Spanish roof detail (see Figures 7 and 8).

Below the bridge lies a black and white world of spartan concrete columns, gravel, sand and garbage. Some of the ‘guts’ of the bridge are visible from the ground underneath it; re-bar protruding through the concrete and weeping rust down the columns, pipes, gas lines, and downspouts from the drainage system in the bridge deck above. Although its detailing is not nearly as elegant as the top of the bridge, the underside is a space that is cathedral-like in its own rough way.

The rail tracks and hydro right-of-way form two arms on either side of the bridge; the hydro right-of-way approaches the bridge at approximately 35 degrees, and the rail tracks curve gently as they approach the elevated area where the railway trestle crossed False Creek. This elevated area left over from the Kitsilano railway trestle has become an arbour-like pathway covered in blackberry bushes, that sits above the seawall. Some other traces left over from when the site was used for storing electric trolleys are an elevated concrete pad directly under the bridge and the odd piece of rail embedded in the ground and randomly placed concrete slabs in the open area to the east of the bridge. Other types of traces that can be found on the site are a variety of discarded goods: electronic equipment, liquor bottles, clothing, garbage and burned items. To the West of the bridge is an alder woods, the former site the Department of National Defence storage buildings.

4.5 Vegetation on the Site

The vegetation present on the site is typical of vacant lots in Vancouver. There is a predominance of blackberries along the abandoned railway and rail right-of-way. At certain times of the year the area where the railway trestle crossed False Creek is completely covered and overgrown with blackberries. The open area on the eastern side of the bridge is vegetated with grasses and moss and is criss-crossed with dirt and gravel pathways through the grass. Tall grass is beginning to take over the abandoned railway tracks on the eastern boundary of the site and, in some spots, almost completely
engulfs them, forming a golden mat of dry grass. At the southeastern edge of the site, where it connects to West 1st Avenue, there are large groups of Dune Tansy growing in tall yellow clusters. On the western side of the old railway trestle, where there is a low, wet boggy area; skunk cabbage and equisetum bloom in the spring. The berms at the northern most end of the site are spotted with ash, alder, birch, bramble and grass.

The only intentionally designed part of the site, Harmony Park, is located on the small protrusion of land into False Creek directly east of the bridge. As noted earlier, the deposit of fill created this area in the 1920’s from the abandoned deep-water harbour project in False Creek. There is a miscellaneous selection of deciduous and coniferous trees randomly planted here for commemorative purposes. Despite its variety of magnolia, weeping conifers and maples, the park offers a very different and flat experience compared to the rest of the site. The grass is regularly cut, benches have been installed in an orderly fashion and there is a group of well-maintained bedding plants. Red alders, ash and birch dominate the woods to the west of the bridge and are starting to spread to other, more open areas of the site.

4.6 Site Circulation

Circulation patterns through the site are very clear. The large open area west of the bridge has resulted in an array of circulation options, with the only obstacles being a clump of alder and blackberry in the southeastern portion of the site adjacent to the Pennyfarthing development. The railway tracks in this area also serve as a well-used path in and out of the site to the southeast.

There are a number of connections at the edge of the site into the surrounding areas. One of these runs from the open area east of the bridge over a steep embankment to the bottom of Creekside Drive. Another connection pathway to the site runs along the hydro right-of-way from the Vancouver Music Academy parking lot abutting the southwestern edge of the site, down a treed slope and into the site. Two concrete staircases on each side of the bridge connect the site to Burrard Street at the south end of the bridge. These are utilitarian in design, but have adequate railings and are used by many who use the site as a short cut.

There is a network of connecting pathways through the woods west of the bridge. A very defined pathway that is used as a service road by the Parks Board runs between the western edge of the bridge and the woods along the top of a berm. This service road also runs along the northern edge of the woods and overlooks the large boat storage and parking area for the Burrard Civic Marina directly to the north (see Figure 5).

4.7 Present Users and Conditions of the Site

Other than the Burrard Bridge itself, the site is currently vacant. The site is used by transients whose temporary camps can be seen in varying numbers throughout the year (between 1 and 4 camps have been observed at one time) in different locations on the site. One spot on the site which seems particularly popular as a living place is on the raised concrete pad directly under the bridge, which is almost constantly inhabited. Research by the Squamish Nation has indicated that the site has been
inhabited by homeless persons for much of its history as a vacant lot. Other popular user groups observed on the site include pedestrians, dog walkers, cyclists and rollerbladers passing through the site, especially along the Seawall at the north end of the site. The site also appears to be a popular route for pedestrians on their way to/from work and as a short cut from Granville Island on the east to Burrard Street and Cornwall Avenue on the west.

The raised pathway along the berm on the western side of the bridge is the most frequently used pathway. It provides a vantage point for looking down and toward the open area under the bridge and beyond and is a relatively exposed compared to the ones farther into the woods. The other paths through the woods are less popular and more frequented by mountain bikers and temporary campers. In August and September, when the blackberries are producing fruit, many people can be seen picking along the railway tracks and the hydro right-of-way.

Based on the traces found on the site, it is assumed the site is a place for dumping garbage (TV's, clothing, etc.), drinking (empty beer cans and liquor bottles), and a place for young people (graffiti, modifications to concrete under the bridge for skateboarding, and temporary mountain bike tracks and ramps). The bermed areas underneath the bridge closest to False Creek are used for Vancouver Engineering Department storage and dragon boat storage. The site has also been used as a temporary giant parking lot for the Vancouver Children's Festival, with cars parking everywhere in the open area east of the bridge and underneath the bridge.

4.8 Experiential Description of the Site

Depending on one's entry point to the site, the experience of the selected site can always differ. Potential access points include a descent from the staircases leading to Burrard Street, pathways along old transit routes (the hydro right-of-way), or regular streets. As well, openings on the outside edge of the alder woods which one can enter the site through, cause one to feel like they are entering the site through a 'back door'. Within the woods, the many curving pathways do not have clear indications of where the lead, and, hence, the visitor can find herself in an unexpected open clearing. One such clearing in the woods provides a large boulder to rest on and appreciate the surroundings. In the northwest portion of the woods there is quite a different spot that is low and boggy, and impassable due to the ponding of water in winter.

The more formal routes onto the site are down from Burrard Street via concrete staircases. Moving down into the openness of site from such a formal set of stairs, one feels a bit lost. When arriving from the southeast, off of First Avenue, one enters the site along two abandoned sets of railway tracks. These tracks are a preferred path through the site, but they end abruptly at the old trestle outcropping above False Creek. In this area the clear demarcation of a corridor tells you it was something before, but exactly what is not clear. The clear gravel path along this corridor also indicates some previous use. The blackberries gather around you as you walk north on the path towards the water. It almost seems possible that you may run into someone at the end of the path. It is difficult to tell. Once arriving at the north end of the path you look out and over the water of False Creek. You feel alone and very protected and have the sensation of privacy.

In the open space to the east of the bridge, you can wander freely; over tracks, across the grass and across ditches where someone has kindly placed a few construction palettes. The rows of columns
supporting the bridge creates a series of frames for the woods behind it. Further north the columns frame the view of the mountains and the apartment buildings of the West End. The site is usually empty of people, but clues that someone is living on the site are present; a camp or a large collection of items can be found on the concrete pad at the south end of the bridge or organized groups of pots, paperback books, and beer cans are hiding in the woods. You don’t expect to see anyone, but at the far south end of the site, where there are steps up to a concrete platform, someone is sleeping. You want to creep by without disturbing them.

When you walk the length of the underside of the bridge, your eye is drawn up to a spectrum of layers of gray concrete. It’s a dank ceiling of pipes and unknown services running up and down its length. Each set of three columns across the width of the bridge has a long, cornice-like ledge at the top of it. It appears to be approximately one metre deep, a perfect place for roosting pigeons or perhaps angels. The columns are bare with the exception of white paint masking the graffiti on the bottom of each column like white ankle socks. The areas under the bridge where the deck is high above makes one look up, but to the south the bridge deck gets lower as it approaches its southern end and the space closes in suddenly. This area with its low headroom and surrounded by concrete feels like a basement (see Figures 7, 8 and 9).

The site is moody and its moods are greatly influenced by the weather. On a cold windy night in November the only sign of friendliness on the site is a small group of people huddled around a fire lit on the concrete platform under the bridge. On sunny days the site appears over exposed, almost too bright, highlighting the signs of aging on the concrete under the bridge. The expanse of the open field east of the bridge seems bigger, and its burnt yellow tone in late August when conditions are extremely dry causes the grass to crunch under your feet. Late August also brings ripeness to the blackberries, which hang like ornaments, in a tangle of gesturing, green limbs.

On the days in between the two extremes described above, when you have come from typical Vancouver places with too many people, shopping, and driving, the site is a place to lie down in, an urban oasis of quite. The arching underside of the bridge gives a sense of being enclosed in a large volume, a cathedral-like space, which causes you to feel as if in you are in an odd urban sanctuary.

4.9 Site Character Zones

The final step in the site analysis was to divide the site into zones that described the mood or character of each part of the site. The site is currently a patchwork of disintegrated, unrelated parts. A clear inventory in a graphic form was necessary to move towards a concept for the place (and eventual park) as a whole. The open vs. closed relationship between the different zones on the site presented a starting point in defining the various character zones (see Figure 6).

The wood on the western side of the bridge is a clearly defined area of the site. It is characterized as very visually accessible and transparent space one can see into very easily when the trees have dropped their leaves. Once the trees come into leaf in the spring and summer the woods appears impenetrable and thick from the outside, but once inside the space opens up into a bright green world. As a contrast, the open space east of the bridge is very bright and exposed and, in some areas, is becoming a naturalized meadow. These open characteristics of this area aided in determining its destiny within the park Master Plan.
4.10 Other Parts of the Site

The area where the railway trestle once connected Kitsilano to the downtown, although an infrastructure trace, has become so overgrown it is evocative of a ceremonial walkway due to the scale and enclosure offered by the blackberries. The hydro right-of-way, with its potholed gravel path and line of hydro poles along it, give the impression of a rural country road, in a condition of controlled wildness. The space under the bridge could only be described as a gray, damp, cool place, casting a shadow all along it's length.

Harmony Park, located on the waterfront at the north end of the site, is an oddly artificial place to be. Its collection of young specimen trees is a large contrast from the other areas of the site. Similarly, the Pennyfarthing development to the east has the cul-de-sac of Creekside Drive as its suburban front yard and the selected site as its messy back alley. The three shortcuts within the site, out of the woods, down from the former trestle crossing to Creekside Drive and across the ditch to Creekside Drive, are ephemeral trails. At certain times of the year, they are too muddy to get across, other times, too overgrown with blackberries. Each one feels like an established but still somehow secret place.
The floating docks were located under the south side of the bridge, and were used for loading and unloading freight until 1957.

View of the bridge looking west of the Kelburno.

Each family was paid $19,000 by the Provincial Government.

Opening day July 1932.

Pre-Chip when the original railroads were loaded.

West of the site the industrial area of False Creek.

The site is now in construction.

The Kelburno Island Grandstand along the shores of Kelburno Point.

The bridge under construction.
Figure 6 - Site Character Zones
NTS
Figure 9 - Shek Impression Photoshop collage

Indomitable core
The fierce cries up myths of courage, glories and copyists. The inundation of the bridge stirs up countries. The abandoned railway lines are a reminder of another time and it is difficult to believe that the creek was once a stream.

Shek Impression - Collage
Chapter 5 - The Master Park Plan

5.1 General Intent of the Master Plan

As noted previously, the Master Plan proposes development of the site as a park. The interventions made in the design speak to the site’s overall character as a weathered, forgotten place, and its display of nature and infrastructure growing old together. The variety of different spaces that make up the site have been related to each other by blurring the boundaries between them.

The design also addresses many of the site’s small elements and the powerful qualities of their details. Additions to the existing infrastructure are included that will encourage a flexibility in programming without altering the space. It is recommended that much of the existing vegetation be maintained and the additions to plant diversity are proposed on the site where there are currently minimal or no plants established.

Throughout the development of this project, a park name was often considered. However, ideas such as “Bridge Park” or “The Y Lands Park” seemed to constrain the character of the place and not represent it accurately. Therefore, the park remains nameless, perhaps being give many names over time by the different users.

The Master Plan uses the existing site structure to inform its development of the park. It acknowledges the current activities that take place on the site and does not seek to change them but facilitate them and widen their range. There are also interventions proposed that are intended for the sole purpose of enjoying the site, appreciating the views through and from it and just ‘being’ in the space (see Figure 10).

5.2 Site Character Zones

As discussed in the site analysis, the character zones point to the areas or parts of the site that will be addressed:

The space underneath the bridge
- The open space to the east of the bridge
- The woods
- The abandoned railway line and trestle
- The shortcuts through and out of the site: 1) to Creekside Drive, and 2) out of the forest
- The blackberry growth along these historical traces
- The hydro right-of-way
- The berm at the north end of the underside of the bridge
- The remains of the staircase in Pier 1

Each of these elements of the site contribute to its unique rough character and are seen as opportunities for emphasis and articulation. These elements are not seen as problems, but rather as opportunities.
Using the character zones outlined in the site analysis, and in order to maintain the overall existing site structure, the Master Plan addresses 8 areas within the park:

1. The meadow
2. The blackberry rail line
3. The rail trestle and path below
4. The space underneath the bridge
5. The berm at Pier 1
6. The woods
7. The hydro right-of-way

Within each area, the interventions, changes and planting additions will be described in detail. In the overall context of the site the Master Plan also proposes some additions to the streetscape and bicycle paths.

5.2.1 The Meadow

The meadow begins at the southeast portion of the site at 1st Avenue and follows westward along the fence bordering Molson Brewery and the railway tracks. It continues northward from the Molson Brewery, occupying the majority of the existing open space of the site east of the Burrard Bridge. The long narrow shape of the space as one first enters from the southeast off of 1st Avenue is intended to be evocative of a formal entrance corridor, but this is where the park’s formality ends. Visitors to the park will enter from 1st Avenue by passing through two roughly finished concrete columns on either side of the abandoned railway tracks acting as a gateway into the park (see Figure 11). These columns will have wrought iron gates attached to them, with one of the gates functioning as a bike rack. The concrete of these posts will be purposely pock marked to encourage the growth of plant material such as moss and lichens.

The abandoned railway tracks, which are to be retained, are becoming overgrown with volunteer grass species. The present growth of vegetation in this area is patchy and, therefore, the Plan proposes that new species of grass (i.e. common orchard grass, meadow barley and common sweet grass) and a wildflower mix are introduced into this area. This approach is proposed to emphasize the expansiveness of the area. The creation of a meadow landscape will also provide habitat for small animals and birds.

In areas where the spaces between the ties in the railway tracks have not naturally filled in, additional soil or growing medium will be added to encourage the spread of grasses and flowers between the ties. At this point there are two rail lines running parallel, one slightly higher than the other with a span of about 1.75m between them. In this space, native wild carrot species of Queen Ann’s Lace will be planted, a species often occurring beside rail lines. The spring blooms of this plant are tall and create a cloud of white. They rise to at least one metre high and in winter the dead flowers and foliage provide a different version of intricacy (see Figure 11).

As the visitor continues west along the abandoned railway, they will pass under a series of 4 pergolas constructed of rough re-bar that will rust over time and will be planted with domestic climbing roses. The roses are intended to intertwine with the blackberry bushes to the north of the path. Along this corridor in the southeastern corner of the park a portion of the space could also be used for community garden
plots. This area would be ideal for community gardens due to its southern exposure and long, narrow shape.

Once one has passed through the series of 4 pergolas, they will have the ability to wander into the adjacent meadow. As the railway tracks curve off to the north, a gravel path is proposed to connect east to the Pennyfarthing Development (see Figure 12). This connection has taken a cue from an established desire line between the Pennyfarthing Development to the stairs to Burrard Street at the south end of the bridge. Wandering through the meadow field the visitor will find large concrete slabs (approximately 4-5) placed in a random fashion. The dimensions of these will be approximately 6 feet by 4 feet, just long enough to stretch out, spread out a picnic or sit comfortably with another and have a chat. The slabs are proposed to be at a comfortable height off the ground just below the top of the vegetation in the meadow. This would allow park users to 'hide' in the grass within the large meadow space (see Figure 13).

As you proceed along the abandoned railway tracks, small decks are built off the ends of the railway ties into the blackberries. This provides space from which to pick berries. These platforms will be constructed of rough weathered wood, perhaps even construction palettes, and will have just enough space for one person to stand (see Figure 12).

After turning further northward along the eastern edge of the meadow, the two railway tracks combine into one and then disappear into the blackberry bushes. Moving further northward from this point the Plan proposes a tunnel through the blackberries. The tunnel is to have the dimensions of a rail car and be constructed of a frame of rough steel that would act as a makeshift trellis for the blackberries to grow over. At this point, the Old Trestle Walk begins.

5.2.2 The Old Trestle Walk

The beginning of this space is marked by the crossing of one of the seasonal paths which runs east/west and connects down to Creekside Drive on the east. Here the Plan proposes a staircase down to Creekside Drive (see Figure 14). The stairs are to be constructed of concrete with deep troughs on the tops of the concrete railings to hold plant material, debris, etc. The posts at the top and bottom of the banister will have classical concrete details that are roughly cast to encourage moss or lichens to grow on them. The tops of these posts are proposed to have deep troughs built-in to allow plantings of sedum and stonecrop. This intervention is an acknowledgement of the evidence that many visitors to the site currently make this shortcut.

Continuing northward on the pathway past the stairs to Creekside Drive, one begins the trestle walk. As noted earlier, the railway tracks have been removed in this area, but a gravel path remains. There are remnants of guardrails at the north end of this outcropping where there is an approximately 3.5 metre drop down to the Seawall below. The visitor will enter this through a modest trellis structure covered in wisteria and blackberries. The intention of combining these two plants here is to juxtapose the roughness of the blackberries with the more refined flowers of the wisteria (see Figure 15). The blackberries are to be retained along the edges of this outcropping.

Prior to reaching the terminus of the trestle outcropping the visitor will pass under a modest pergola covered in a slightly more delicate plant; the climbing roses. The feeling of uncertainty remains as one makes their way to the end of the trestle walk, not knowing who or what lies ahead. Along the length of this trestle walk pathway are intermittent and grotesquely large lamp standards with their luminaries.
fashioned after blackberries. These luminaries proposed to be are made of varying shades of pale green, dark red, purple and black blown glass. Moss, dust, etc. are intended to accumulate on the blackberry lights to provide a natural and weathered look. The posts are to be constructed of twisted and curved metal, wild and unruly like the blackberry plants themselves. These blackberry lights are not intended as functional lighting. Rather, these are intended more as art objects in the landscape than for the purpose of lighting the path. In a wild landscape such as this we might imagine we see things that are not there, such as huge, over-sized blackberries (see Figure 16).

At the terminus of the trestle there is a clear view of False Creek and the Burrard Bridge. This is a very private spot for sitting, looking at the view and contemplating. As well, a small shelter is located at the end of the old trestle walk. The shelter is proposed to be constructed of weathered wood with a corrugated steel roof which speaks to the industrial past of the site and will amplify the sound of rain. The shelter is intended to accommodate only 2 or 3 people. It is sited slightly off to one side of this area, as if it were part of the rail line that once was there. The character in this area is one of prospect-refuge, where one can view the people passing by on the Seawall below, but be sheltered and hidden at the same time (see Figure 15).

Directly west of the old trestle walk the land drops down to a boggy area (see Figure 22). Some volunteer trees have sprouted in this area, and in spring skunk cabbages and equisetum (horsetail) make their way up along the adjacent pathway. With the addition of a few native wetland species (i.e. devil's club, etc.) this damp area can be exploited and its diversity increased. West of the path the maintained lawn area is to be replaced with meadow planting.

5.2.3 North of the Seawall

A large portion of the site north of the Seawall is the current site of Harmony Park (see Figure 17), and it too is proposed as a meadow area for exploration and enjoyment. The former staircase in Pier one will be replaced. New stairs, to connect the meadow and the bottom of the pier stairway, are proposed. These will be constructed out of concrete and will be designed to complement the bridge.

The surface of the top of the berm under the bridge will remain as compacted gravel. A matching staircase is also proposed down the west side of the berm to provide access to the Burrard Civic Marina area and the Seawall. The berm is to remain as an open space underneath the bridge with a 0.40 metre concrete ledge along the east and west side to provide seating and a safety barrier (see Figure 18).

At the northern most end of the berm under the bridge, the space between the columns is another special vantage spot. The space between the columns is approximately 8 metres wide and one feels a strong connection to the bridge here due to the proximity and visibility of the bridge's structure. Here, seating is to be provided by a concrete seat designed to look like an oversized sofa. The concrete will be formed with curved edges and indentations for comfortable seating (see Figure 18).

The Seawall, which is at a grade approximately 4.0 metres below the berm, interrupts the line of the berm under the bridge. A pedestrian bridge is proposed to connect the berm under the bridge on either side of the Seawall. The design of the pedestrian bridge is to be simple and functional, constructed of steel supports and faced with steel plates. The steel plate facing of pedestrian bridge is to be left
unfinished and allowed to rust and appear as an attachment to the Burrard Bridge above. This pedestrian bridge will allow free movement between the two sections of the berm under the shelter of the bridge (Figure 17).

A washroom facility will be set into the eastern side of the berm, north of the Seawall. The roof of the washroom will be a living green roof and will be directly adjacent to the top of the berm. The interior walls of the berm will be finished with a mixture of clay, mud and tree roots; this is meant to create the impression of being in an underground space. Inside of the building will be a self contained, self cleaning coin-operated washroom system (see Figure 18).

5.2.4 Under the Bridge

A number of installations are proposed for the area under the Burrard Bridge. These are to be installed between under the bridge between the northern edge of the woods and the southern end of the bridge. One of the intentions of the Master Plan for this area is to allow cultural events such as dance or theatrical performances, film screenings, art exhibits, etc. Elements to be added at the top of the bridge’s support columns include hooks for hanging curtains, screens, lighting or audio equipment. Recesses for electrical boxes provide power sources for lighting and sound equipment. The ladders will be permanent additions to several of the columns while, on other columns, the space will simply be available for this type of equipment to be added (see Figure 19 and 20).

The ground surface of this area under the bridge will be smooth concrete onto which temporary stages may be constructed and temporary seating for audiences could be accommodated. When not in use as a performance space, this concrete surface under the bridge will provide an ideal area for skateboarding, which is another user group which the Master Plan is intended to accommodate. Along the east side of this concrete surface will be a concrete channel which directs a portion of the storm water runoff from the bridge deck to the existing ditch that runs parallel to the railway tracks and the blackberry bushes (see Figure 12). The channel that follows the bridge will include a series of 4 seats intended to serve as seating and a surface for skateboarding. The area under the south end of the bridge will also be lighted to encourage skateboarding.

The bridge’s support columns also provide opportunities for enriching and adding detail to the underside of the bridge. The height of the columns and their large surface area could accommodate various forms of artistic expressions such as graffiti, murals, or even hanging sculptural elements (see Figure 19 and 20). An important part of the Master Plan is maintaining this area under the bridge as open and clear from permanent structures, not only to preserve the experiential quality of the space, but also to allow the endless range of program possibilities that might occur in this space.

5.2.5 The Woods

The Master Plan does not alter the existing system of paths through the woods on the west side of the bridge. Additional understorey planting and the installation of a constructed wetland in the low-lying centre portion of the woods are proposed.

Additional planting in the understorey of the woods is intended to provide a greater diversity of native species to this area and ensure the longevity of the woods. Species to be included are twin flower, bracken fern, white fawn lily, wild ginger, sword fern, mock orange and vine maple.
The constructed wetland is to be located in the north-western portion of the woods and takes advantage of this existing boggy area. The water source for the wetland will be through the channeling of a portion of the storm water runoff from the bridge deck down to a series of 4 channels on the western side of the bridge. These channels will run from the western edge of the bridge, through culverts under the berm between the edge of the bridge and the woods, and into one main channel. This main channel will then run to the constructed wetland (see Figures 21 and 22)

The edge of the channel in the woods will be planted with native wetland species such as skunk cabbage and rushes. The wetland itself will be planted with native wetland species such as skunk cabbage, rushes, yellow pond lily and smart weed. The pathways in the woods leading to the wetland will be widened as they reach the southern edge of the wetland to provide a viewing area. As well, a small shelter constructed of recycled wood and a corrugated metal roof will provide seating. Allowing the storm water runoff from the bridge deck to run through channels and into the wetland area is intended to provide opportunities for natural ground water regeneration and biofiltration.

The creation of a constructed wetland and the diversification of plant material in the woods, contributes to the improvement of a ‘wild’ urban area that is ecologically sound and demonstrates how the site can be altered to improve the experience of the woods.

The proposed Park Manager’s house will be located on the western edge of the woods. This location was chosen because it provides the park manager with convenient access to roads and does not introduce buildings into the main spaces of the park.

5.2.6 The Hydro Right-of-Way

The Master Plan calls for the hydro right-of-way to generally be maintained in its current condition. The blackberries in this area are to be controlled according to the Management Plan. Lighting is added to the right-of-way through a design based on lighting suspended from wires reminiscent of the streetcar wires that once hung over this area. The lights are to be covered with glass styled after the beehive-shaped glass telephone insulators in tones of blue and green. The lighting is intended to be low-level, acting more as a demarcation of this once-significant transportation corridor in the city (see Figure 21).
An example of the type of...
Figure 14 - Stair Short Cut to Creekside Drive NTS
The Old Treacle Walk

An example of the type of space enviroment for the entrance to

A rose parterres consists of SAR. Here reads you through the Old Treacle Walk

Figure 16 - Blackheath Light and Rose Parterres Detail

The Blackheath Light is made of different grades of brown grass and

Blackheath Light Detail

Detail Development of Blackheath Light
Figure 20 - Possibilities for Performance Space Under the Bridge

NTS
Nodding Trisetum
Grass with white fawn lily

Vine Maple

Bracken Fern
Mock Orange

Existing Alders

Pacific Bleeding Heart

Wild Ginger

Sword Fern

Twin Flower

Small Flowering Bulrush

Kellogg's sedge

Yellow Pond Lily

Hardhack

Existing Alders

Pacific Bleeding Heart

Skunk Cabbage

Wetland Planting Plan

Figure 22 - Planting Plans for Wetland, Trestle and Woods

NTS
Chapter 6 – Site Management Plan

6.1 Management Plan Goals

Due to the design intention of permitting evolution and change in the park, the design interventions are ones that purposely do not require high levels of maintenance or care. In fact, they may be the same type and level of care that an owner or land manager of a vacant lot might subscribe to. However, even minimal maintenance requirements will involve a set of instructions or policies to guide the evolution of the space. Therefore, a management plan has been created for this purpose. The effects of erosion, growth and age are all qualities that the plan encourages in the park. The Management Plan addresses first and foremost the control and containment of the blackberries and the establishment of the meadow species, and the additions and evolution of the forest. As well, the Management Plan includes methods for encouraging the natural processes of succession plants. The second part of the Management Plan involves the more social aspects of the park. For example it discusses the variety of programs that might be taking place there, including programs for young people, cultural programs, and programs for people who inhabit the park on a temporary basis. The plan also suggests the establishment of a park manager’s house. The park manager would be a frontline individual who administers the social aspects of the plan as well as providing general surveillance, upkeep and dealing with any unforeseen problems that would arise.

The Management Plan’s goal is to outline the methods and policies that will help to maintain the intent of the Master Plan and guide the park into the future. Once the interventions outlined in the Master Plan are completed, the site is essentially meant to be left alone. However, there are certain elements in the park that do require specific instructions for their on-going management so that the basic site structure and intent for the park outlined in the Master Plan is protected.

6.2 Management Plan Issues

The two main types of management issues addressed are: 1) the physical aspects of the park, and 2) the social aspects of the park. Management issues to address within these two areas are as follows.

Management of land zones within the park:

1. The meadow
2. The woods
3. The blackberries
4. The wetland in the woods

Management of social / cultural programs in the park:

1. Camping and campers
2. Park board house responsibilities
3. Programs under the bridge - cooperation with other groups in context: the Planetarium, Emily Carr School of Art, etc.
4. Graffiti, and other physical modifications to the bridge
5. Access to Pier 1 stairs safety issues
6. General safety issues

6.3 Management of Land Zones in the Park

6.3.1 Meadow Establishment and Mowing Schedules

As noted earlier, the grass species to be included in the meadow areas include Common Orchard Grass, Blue Joint Grass, Meadow Barley, Common Sweet Grass and Common Velvet Grass. Wildflower species for the meadow areas include shirley poppy, bachelors buttons, cosmos, red columbine, common camas, and nodding onion (see Appendix A for full plant list). In order to maintain balance, it will be necessary to spread seeds once every two years. Some plants that spread by seed may not be as resilient and aggressive as those that spread by other methods, and it may be necessary to spread seeds of these species periodically in order to maintain the plant variety in the meadow (Kendle, p. 252, 1997).

The establishment of a natural meadow with a variety of species will require a significantly lower level of maintenance than conventional lawn areas in many parks. A lower level of maintenance will also require fewer resources, in terms of labour and financial resources. As well, it has been shown that the establishment of meadow type grasslands as an alternative to conventional lawns will increase certain bird populations, creating more bio-diversity in an area (Hough, 1995, p. 132). Once the grassland meadow has been established, the area should be mowed once a year in late autumn once breeding is over for any resident animal populations and migrating birds have benefited from the seeds (Hough, 1995). Meadows can also be mowed at different times in different areas to allow a plant to complete its bloom.

Unfortunately, mowing such a large area only once a year will create a large amount of clippings. It is not practical to gather these clippings into groups and expect their decomposition simply because of the potential volume. Given that the meadow areas are to be mowed only once a year, disposing of the annual clippings at the GVRD compost production plant would still be less costly than disposing of cuttings throughout most of the year from a conventional lawn.

6.3.2 The Woods

Although the plan recommends that the woods be maintained in its current condition as a succession forest, the typical number of layers of understorey in succession forests is not present. The blackberries are beginning to dominate the understorey of the woods and the only other dominant species in the understorey is hardhack. The Master Plan calls for a number of new species to be added to create depth and variety in this layer of the forest. The selected species for the understorey are:

- Vine maple
- Nodding trisetum
- Bracken fern
- Fawn lily
These species are intended for the grassy clearing in the forest:

- Mock orange
- Twin flower
- Pacific bleeding heart
- Wild ginger

6.3.3 Constructed Wetland in the Woods

The types of wetland plant species which will be used in the constructed wetland include:

- Redwood sorrel
- Small flowering bulrush
- Skunk cabbage
- Kellogg’s sedge
- Yellow pond lily
- Rushes
- Smart weed

Part of the function of the constructed wetland in the woods is to provide biofiltration and natural ground water regeneration opportunities by redirecting storm water from the bridge deck away from the sewer system. Although the volume of water passing along the various channels and ditches included in the Master Plan may not be extremely large, the presence of these features and their visibility is also intended to be an educational tool. Members of the general public will have the opportunity to recognize that roads and development create large amounts of storm water runoff that can be dealt with in ways other than conventional storm sewers. The constructed wetland in the woods is also intended to take advantage of the pre-existing quasi-wetland area in the forest and create a focal point within the forest. The main maintenance consideration for the constructed wetland is the periodic need to control infestation of some of the species suggested.

6.3.4 Blackberries

The maintenance requirements of blackberries, or *rubus discolour*, in the planned park is divided up into two forms:

1. Regular cutting back of plants along the railway tracks, the hydro right-of-way and trestle berm.
2. Containing the blackberries in these areas by digging up new shoots in other areas, especially in the meadow.

The Nature Conservancy of Virginia recommends a number of methods for removal of *rubus discolour*. Hand methods allow one to be selective about the removal and do not disturb the surrounding vegetation. As well, with hand methods of removal it is typically assumed that areas having the highest blackberry to native species ratio are targeted first (Hoshovsky, 2002). This method is effective in destroying young plants, through hoeing to loosen soil or cutting off their tops. Manually operated tools
can be used for cutting the tops off of the blackberry plants, such as loppers, machetes, or brush cutters. This method would be useful in areas such as the trestle berm, any short cut paths out of the woods and the short cut stairway down to Creekside Drive. The Nature Conservancy suggests the use of a claw mattock for removing root crowns which pulls roots from the ground in a manner similar to a hammer pulling out nails (Hoshovsky, 2002). Small infestations of blackberry in the meadow area should be completely cut out and burned. This is the most effective solution to prepare the area for seeding.

6.4 Management of Social / Cultural Programs in the Park

Due to the type of programming being planned for the park on the selected site the Management Plan requires a social component that addresses such issues as dealing with camping and the homeless, graffiti and potential arts events, where certain programs and activities will take place, and safety issues.

6.4.1 Camping

It will be important to monitor the changing transient population of campers in the park and have a policy of tolerance for the types and styles of dwellings they may construct. An increase in the number of campers in the park is not expected due to the introduction of other programs involving different social groups that will keep the population of campers at a reasonable number. It is acknowledged that a policy of free or condoned camping is somewhat of an experiment. This aspect of the plan sets up a situation that does not have any precedents in Vancouver.

6.4.2 Graffiti and Arts Events

One of the goals of the Master Plan is to provide space in the park for youth. This is achieved through the construction of a smooth, flat concrete space under the bridge for skateboarding and a designated graffiti zone in this area. This would require an amendment to the City of Vancouver's new anti-graffiti by-law that states that property owners are responsible for the removal of graffiti on their properties. This will allow for an accumulation of this exuberant art form. Likewise, the park will be open to other art forms such as performance art, potentially utilizing the space in the woods, under the bridge or in the meadow. Encouragement of art in the park provides opportunities for festivals similar to the Hebden Bridge Sculpture Trail Festival which is held in England every year where sculptures are temporarily displayed along woodland and river paths.

6.4.3 Safety

A common concern in the design of urban space is that it is safe and defensible. Although it is not the intention of this design to create unsafe spaces, in keeping with the philosophy of wild places and mystery which have guided the Master Plan development conventional lighting was not included in the park. The Master Plan does include minimal lighting along the hydro right-of-way and the old trestle walk. As well, providing lighting at the south end of the bridge will encourage skateboarding in that area. Given that the meadow is a large open space which receives ambient light from the Molson Brewery and the streetlights on the bridge deck, lighting has not been included in this area. The
existing lighting provided along the Seawall does provide some lighting to the areas of the site it passes through.

Some of the potentially unsafe areas of the design must be recognized. For example, it is intended that the re-opened Pier 1 staircase up to the bridge deck has a scheduled opening and closing time such as a dawn until dusk. Lighting would also be installed within the pier stairway itself to provide basic navigational ease up and down the stairs. Access to the stairs should be reassessed after a trial period of six months to ensure that if an unsafe area is created it can be properly managed.
Chapter 7 – Conclusion and Summary

As cities become more and more homogeneous and predictable, there is an increasing need for places that are unique. We can often find these places in the most unlikely areas: vacant lots, dilapidated buildings and in the shadow of large pieces of infrastructure. In this thesis, I have attempted to take a vacant site and its disparate parts and knit them together. Interactions taking place between the natural world and the urban traces that we leave behind are also emphasized. This site and project is just as much about small details as it is about large spaces. In thinking about how people move through the city, the proposed park for the selected site is conceived of as a surprise, a “rupture” and a place where things (and people) are able to grow wild. The Master Plan includes a constructed wetland in the wooded area west of the Burrard Bridge and a meadow in the wide-open area east of the bridge. Within these areas are places where people can be alone in the city and escape from the city. It also maintains the major existing pedestrian routes through the site and, with the addition of three staircases, circulation is improved. By providing infrastructure and a smooth concrete surface underneath the bridge, program opportunities are increased to include skateboarding and performance art. Although most of the moves made in the design are not meant to create what most would conceive as a typical urban park, certain interventions are recommended that do make it park-like such as the washroom in the berm and the lighting proposed for the right-of-way.

The proposal put forth in this thesis is an attempt to capture the magic that exists in unlikely places in the city. Though the conditions may change, sites such as this remain a part of the constantly changing fabric of the city where our imaginations are free to roam. The trick is to catch them. Elements of the design could also be used as solutions for smaller scale vacant sites in cities such as former gas stations. There are many opportunities for exploiting these forgotten places in the city, be it a community garden, a site of self-expression and art, or an unofficial park. Although the ultimate form of the site is yet to be determined, the sentiments behind this project can only serve to heal the place and its history.
List of References


Saarinen, Thomas F., Seamon, David and Sell, James L., editors. *Environmental Perception and Behavior, An Inventory and Prospect*, University of Chicago, Department of Geography, Chicago, 1984.


Appendix A - Plant List

Entrance at 1st Avenue

Ceanthus velutinus
Daucus carota
Dodecantheon pulchellum
Malus fusca
Philadelphus lewisii
Rubus leucodermis
Spiraea douglasii

The Meadow

Allium cernuum
Camassia quamash
Centaurea cyanus
Dactylis glomerata
Eschscholzia californica
Hierochloe odorata
Hordeum brachyantherum
Papaver rhoeas

The Staircase to Creekside Drive

Amphidium lapponicum
Sedum spathulifolium

The Old Trestle Walk

Rosa brunonii hybrid
Wisteria sinensis

The Wet Area below the Trestle

Ceanthus velutinus
Malus fusca
Oplopanax horridus

Snowbrush
Queen Ann’s Lace
Few - Flowered Shooting Star
Pacific Crabapple
Mock Orange
Black Raspberry
Hard Hack
Nodding Onion
Common Camas
Bachelor’s Button
Orchard Grass
California Poppy
Common Sweetgrass
Meadow Barley
Shirley Poppy
Bottle Moss
Broad - Leaved Stonecrop
Climbing Rose
Chinese Wisteria
Snowbrush
Pacific Crab Apple
Devil’s club
**Woods Area: Understorey and Path Edges**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plant Name</th>
<th>Common Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acer circinatum</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asarum canadense</td>
<td>Wild Ginger</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dicentra formosa</td>
<td>Pacific Bleeding Heart</td>
</tr>
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<td>White Fawn Lily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linnaea borealis</td>
<td>Twin Flower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphus lewisii</td>
<td>Mock Orange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pteridium aquilinum</td>
<td>Bracken Fern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tresetum cernuum</td>
<td>Nodding Trisetum</td>
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**Constructed Wetland in Woods**

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<th>Common Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Carex kelloggii</td>
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<td>Lysichiton americanum</td>
<td>Skunk Cabbage</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nuphar polysepalum</td>
<td>Yellow Pond Lily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxalis oregana</td>
<td>Redwood Sorrel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polygonum amphibium</td>
<td>Water Smartweed</td>
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